

A WEIGHTY CHARGE

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Keep yourselves in the love of God."
Jude 1:21.*

JUDE gives a very terrible picture of what will happen in the last days; he describes apostates, and paints them in the blackest colors, and he then informs us that there will come in the last time mockers, and with them separatists and sensualists, all of whom will assail the church of the living God. It feels very natural that after foretelling our adversaries, and describing them, and so bidding us view the hosts assembled for the war, he should next instruct us how to prepare our defenses, and set our forces in battle array. In the 20th and 21st verses of his epistle, Jude mentions the great Christian *Quadrilateral*, the four forts which must be well manned and carefully maintained if we would battle the advancing foe. I shall call your attention to the four important points, though I must do so with the utmost brevity.

The Apostle says, "You beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." *Edification* is a grand defense against the assaults of skeptics and heretics. These prey upon the ignorant and unestablished, but fail to overthrow those who are rooted and grounded in the truth of God. We need to be continually built up—learning more, loving more, and *living* more the grand truths of the gospel. We must see to it that the foundation is right, for it will be useless, or worse than useless, to be built up upon false principles—it is "on our most holy faith" that the building must be based. We should be so established in the doctrines of grace as to recognize their holiness, and to imitate them in our own lives; only a "most holy" faith is safe for the soul, and woe unto the man who rests content with any other. See, then, brothers and sisters, that to ward off the ills of these last times we must labor to know the truth ourselves, and must endeavor to instruct our brethren in them. Personal and mutual edification in the church should be zealously maintained as one of the most valuable defenses against the invasion of error.

The second most necessary defensive principle in the church is *devotion*. "Praying in the Holy Spirit" is the weapon with which the hosts of the Lord will put to rout the armies of the alien. The prayers of saints are the mighty artillery with which the walls of our Jerusalem are protected; supplication is a cannon which throws tremendous bolts against the advancing foe, as Sennacherib knew when Hezekiah pleaded with God! The prayers, however, must be deeply spiritual, written on the heart by the Holy Spirit, and presented with energy of His creating. Formal, lifeless petitions are but a Chinese painted fortress—while praying in the Holy Spirit is an impregnable castle! Those "groans which cannot be uttered" are pieces of ordinance which make the gates of hell tremble, but we must put our hearts under the influence of the blessed Spirit of God to have this, and then lift them up in continued intercession before God, and then there can be no fear about the preservation of our minds from the error of the wicked. A praying church soon tries the spirits of false prophets, and casts them forth as evil. I have far more faith in prayer than in controversy; keep the prayer meetings going! Maintain private prayer with earnestness, and we may laugh to scorn all the sophisms of unbelievers and deceivers!

Jude next mentions as a third important matter the *affections* of the church. If the hearts of the members of the church are right, mockers and scoffers can do very little against them. "Keep yourselves in the love of God," for a warm-hearted company of Christians, who love the Lord with all their hearts, and with all their souls, are not likely to be overcome by mockers and sensualists. Love to God will be as a wall of fire round about them. In dull, decaying churches, errors spread like ivy on the crumbling walls of an old abbey, but life, zeal, earnestness, warm-heartedness throw off these evils even as a red-hot iron plate evaporates the drops which fall upon it. Love God, and you will not love false doctrine; keep the heart of the church right, and her head will not go far wrong. Let her abide in the love of Jesus, and she will abide in the truth.

The fourth point to which he calls attention is the brightness of our *expectancy*. “Looking,” says he, “for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Expect that Christ will come, and come with undeserved blessings which shall display the mercy of God to us! Expect that when He comes it will be to end our conflicts, to tread Satan under our feet, and to reveal and perfect that eternal life which He has already implanted in us! Looking forward to the sure coming of Christ, the church will not be afraid of the great swelling words of men, nor dread their murmurings; she will have an answer to the tyrant’s question, “Where is the promise of His coming?” She will reply, “Behold the Lord comes with 10,000 of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” First, “building,” and then, “looking” from her watchtower, the church will defy the powers of evil, confident of victory at the appearing of her Lord.

Brethren, if the darkest times should come, if these four points are diligently maintained, we shall be perfectly safe against the cunning assaults of the arch enemy! O servants of the living God, seek with all your hearts the edification of the saints! Keep your devotions warm, keep your affections pure, and keep bright your expectancy, for so shall you stand fast in the tempest! In prospect thereof we may sing with Jude, “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

At this time we take the third of the four exhortations as our text—“*Keep yourselves in the love of God.*” This may refer, and I have no doubt it does, to mutual oversight. Christians are to labor to keep *each other* in communion with God; if they see a brother grow cold in his attachment to the Lord, it is their duty to endeavor by gentle rebukes, consolations, and admonitions, to restore the heart of the backsliding one to proper warmth. “Keep yourselves in the love of God,” that is to say—exercise a mutual oversight, and practice watchfulness over each other, lest any of you should by little and little lose your sense of the love of God. Let not the wolf steal here a lamb, and there a sheep, and so diminish your numbers as a church, but ask for the Spirit’s aid that you may keep yourselves and your brethren near to the great Shepherd, for so shall you be safe. Mutual oversight will not, however, be the theme of this morning’s discourse. I must narrow the text down to a *personal* duty—let each man keep *himself* in the love of God.

To many minds this exhortation will appear to be somewhat unguarded. I am quite certain that if I were the author of the sentence, my very sound brothers and sisters would seriously object to it, and would say, “We are kept by the power of *God* through faith unto salvation, and to exhort us to keep *ourselves* is useless, carnal, and legal.” To whom I reply—dear brethren, I am *not* the author of the phrase, and therefore if you have any quarrel with it, will you be so kind as to remember that your dispute is with the Holy Spirit and not with me? I find it in the Inspired Volume, and I have no power or wish to blot it out! Moreover, I find in the word of God many other exhortations against which the same objection may be brought, and I do not intend either to twist them to mean something else, or to avoid expounding them from fear of being thought unsound. With half an eye one can see that while in Holy Scripture we are taught that we can do nothing without Christ, we are at the same time exhorted to do all sorts of things, and are even bid to be *perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect!* If this is inconsistent it is the inconsistency of Scripture, and I bow before it and leave others to quibble if they choose. All power to do good comes from the Holy Spirit, and all will towards good is from the same source, yet we are bid to perform right things as freely as if we could and would do them of ourselves. Nor are the exhortations of the word of God couched in guarded language and hedged round with limiting phrases. Holy Scripture seldom guards its own utterances but speaks freely, and whereas men are so fearful lest they should be mistaken that they frequently interject parentheses and explanations, and so spoil the effect of what they are saying, we find the Holy Spirit speaking out what He has to say and leaving it to the instructed minds of believers themselves to remember those other truths of God which balance the doctrine in hand. We are too fearful about truth, she needs no armor, her naked beauty is better protection than a coat of mail. As no one thinks of wrapping the sun in a blanket on a winter’s day, so we need not anxiously guard and protect the truth of God—let it shine forth, and it will be its own interpreter!

Yet look at the context, and you will see that it lends no sanction to the proud idea that a man can keep himself apart from the grace of God, for the sentence which precedes the text is “praying in the Holy Spirit.” Remember to keep yourselves, but do so by praying in the Holy Spirit, and so confessing that you are dependent upon His divine power. The following sentence also lifts my text out of a legal atmosphere by saying, “Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life”—showing that your eyes are to be on Jesus and to the mercy of God, and not to yourself—and by no means to any merit or power of your own. My brothers, we must never be afraid to exhort one another because of the Scriptural doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit! This should urge us forward, and by no means hold us back. We are not to feel ourselves muzzled and gagged when we preach practical Precepts because we believe comforting doctrines; let us speak the whole truth with a gracious liberty, resting quite assured that the Lord can reconcile His own truth in the hearts and experiences of His people, and does not need us to be perpetually agitated with the fear of damaging His truth, as if it were some delicate eggshell china which we might break with a touch, or a cobweb which would be swept away by the movement of our hand! Let us speak the truth with all boldness as we ought to speak, and say as the text does, “keep yourselves in the love of God.”

This implies, however, beloved friends, that you *are* in the love of God. It is not an exhortation directed to every man, for some men are not in the love of God. It is directed to those of you who are in that love to keep yourselves in it.

Let me, then, begin by inquiring, are you in the love of God? Not, are you an *object* of divine benevolence, for that He exercises towards *all* His creatures—but do you *know* His love in Christ Jesus? Have you believed in Jesus Christ unto eternal life, and seen the Father’s love beaming in the face of Jesus? If you have believed it, you have also enjoyed it, for the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you, and you have been conscious of a joy superior to anything which this world can create! Well, then, continue to believe in that love so deep, so strong, so true! Abide also in the enjoyment of that love, and pray for more. Do not lose the sense of it by careless living; if you have ever known that love, it is quite certain that you love God in return; therefore continue to love the Lord. This is, probably, the particular meaning of the exhortation before us. The love of God in you is made manifest by the love which you have towards God, and the consequent affection which you feel to all His people; endeavor, then, to always love God, and to love Him more and more. Feed the sacred flame of divine affection till it becomes an all-consuming fire. “Oh, love the Lord all you His saints.” With all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength, love the Lord, and love your neighbor as yourselves! Especially cultivate love unto all the saints, for this also is the love of God. “Let brotherly love continue.” “Walk in love as Christ also has loved you.” Keep yourselves in the love of God; you are in that love, you believe it, you enjoy it, you reflect it, you manifest it to others, then continue both to believe and enjoy it, and persevere in displaying and manifesting it in your love to God and your love to men.

Two things this morning, and only two; the first will be *motives for keeping ourselves in the love of God*; and the second will be *means to assist us in so doing*.

I. First, **MOTIVES** for “keeping yourselves in the love of God.” It is as though a courtier having gained the favor of his sovereign should receive upon his entrance into court this good advice from a friend—“You now sun yourself in your sovereign’s favor, so act as to retain your position, that you may never be sent away from his presence, and made to occupy a lower place. He is not capricious, but he is jealous, therefore be careful so you may dwell in the light of his countenance.” Believers are always God’s servants, but they are not always smiled upon; let them so live as never to lose that smile. When we go to the sunny south in the winter for our health, we are advised by the physician to keep ourselves as much as possible in the sun; we are told to let our rooms look towards the rising sun, and to keep clear of sunless streets and courts. This is the advice of wisdom, for if you lodge in rooms upon which the sun never shines, you might as well be at home in our own chilly land! The sun is the great physician, and by basking in his beams we find healing beneath his wings. It is even thus with the love of God, “Keep yourselves in it,” sun yourselves in it all day long. The flowers teach us this, for when the sun shines upon them they open themselves and turn their faces towards its light. They love him and they delight to be kissed by his beams, and therefore they keep themselves as much as they can in his

brightness. When trees are planted in a spot where the sun only reaches them in one direction, they put forth their boughs towards the sun's quarter, and seek his beams. Do you the same! You are in God's love, continue in it, grow towards it, keep yourselves in it! Your Father loves you; do not, like the prodigal, go away from that love, or forget it, or slight it, or grieve it; enjoy it, be warmed by it, and be sanctified by it evermore.

What is to be the motive for this? It is clear that *all the motives which led you to desire God's love at first should lead you to stay in it*. If it is to me, a poor broken-hearted sinner, of the utmost importance to find the love which heals my wounds, then, being healed, it is equally important that I should keep in that love lest I should be wounded again! If being my father's prodigal child it was a great thing to get back and once more receive the kiss of love, and hear him acknowledge me as his son, it must be equally good for me to stay at home and never play the prodigal again! The true son abides in the house forever, and dreads the very idea of going forth from it. You know, beloved, with what earnestness you were formerly pleaded with that you should not rest without the love of God in Christ; now, I have but a few minutes this morning to spend on any one argument, and therefore I shall leave it to you to remember what those arguments were, and to enforce them upon yourselves. That which is worth getting is worth keeping! If divine love was worth seeking, even if you had been called to lay down your lives in the search, it must be equally worth retaining, cost what it may. I have heard that many who have been shrewd at making money, have not been able to keep a fortune after they have gained it; and I fear there are many Christians who, with much zeal obtain a high degree of enjoyment of the love of God, and become very warm and earnest in the ways of God, but they cannot retain their fervor, and after a while relapse into lukewarmness. Many get into the sunlight of full assurance, but they soon leave it and are darkened with doubts and fears, and are chilled with insensibility and indifference, and so they do not keep themselves in the love of God as they should. Let it not be so with you, but hear your Master's words wherein He says, "Abide in Me." If love within the soul is worth the getting, it is worth the keeping—continue in it!

Next, *we should continue in God's love because it is His due*. Brethren, that I should know that God loves me, and should rejoice in it, and then should love Him in return, is His due under the law, for this is the substance of His law to Israel, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." And that because He had revealed His love to Israel, for the preamble of the commandments runs thus—"I am the Lord your God that brought you out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage." He claims their love because of His love to them. Much more is it so under the gospel. That matchless display of divine mercy should exercise upon us a divine influence, it should be permitted to melt, renew, restrain, constrain, and govern us. Receiving its blessings, and meditating upon its glories, we ought to be as much affected by it as wax by the flame. Touched with its flames of love, our hearts ought to burn with loving gratitude, as with coals of juniper. See God in the gospel and not love Him? It is monstrous! Brothers and sisters, if you have part and lot in the covenant of grace, the love of God with all subduing power must and will hold you beneath its sway! That God's love should be felt and returned is a *duty*, but at the same time a *privilege* unbounded.

Remember that God's nature makes love to be His due. Such a character as His engrosses the love of every intelligent and right-minded creature. Not to love such a one as God is would be impossible to renewed hearts! He reveals himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, and in each divine person displays a sacred form of matchless goodness, so that *not* to love Him is baseness and profanity. God's nature claims it, and our nature also cannot rest without it; I mean, of course, our *regenerate* nature. Grace has made us the children of God, and true children must love their Father; it cannot be that the life of God is in your soul if there is no sense of the divine love and no return of that love to Him from where it came. As the sparks seek the sun, who is the father of flame, so in warm affections and communing the love of God in the soul seeks the God who gave it. You cannot be God's children and yet not love Him! Well, then, since law and gospel, since *His* nature and *your* renewed nature, since Father, Son, and Spirit all have claims upon your hearts, oh, if you love the Lord Jesus, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

Remember, too, dear brethren (and this is a strong argument) that *love is the evidence of faith, and the grace by which faith operates*. The faith which saves the soul is always attended by love. It is written, "Faith works by love." "Faith without works is dead," but faith without love is faith without works,

therefore faith without love is a dead thing, and cannot possibly save a soul. If you say, "I believe in Jesus Christ," my dear brother, if that is true, you have proved it already by loving God; therefore prove it still by loving on, even to the end! May the ever blessed Spirit help you to do so!

Another argument lies here—*the love of God is the spring of all our graces*. I include in the term "the love of God," both God's love to us and our love to Him, for they are very much the same. Let me use one illustration: you have a magnifying glass, and hold it up before the sun till you focus the rays upon a piece of dry wood and set it on fire. Now, while you see the wood burning to ashes, will you tell me what it is that burns? Does the heat of the sun burn the wood or does the wood burn? The heat which you feel while the wood is burning, is it due to the sun or to the wood? Of course at first the fire is purely and simply the flame of the sun, but afterwards the wood itself begins to burn; the sun burns the wood, and then the wood itself burns; even so the love of God comes into our heart, and then our heart loves too, and in both cases, "love is of God." No man is a Christian unless he himself loves God with his own heart, but yet our love to God is nothing more nor less than the refection of *God's* love to us; so that it comes to the same thing. The love of God, whether from Him *to* us or from us *to* Him, is practically one and the same thing. This, I say, we must retain in our souls, because it is the source of every virtue; no man can do anything aright if he does not love God. Without love to God, where is zeal for His glory? Where is patient endurance for His sake? Where is cheerful obedience to His will? Without love to God where is true knowledge of God? Can any man know a God whom he does not love? Without love to God can any action be acceptable in His sight? Brothers and sisters, if you have more love you will have more of every grace, your love will be the test of the healthiness of your condition. When love burns, the whole of our nature blazes with holy fire, but when love smolders, every grace is like smoking flax. Love must be maintained as a primary necessity of the divine life if we are indeed to glorify God.

Keep yourself in the love of God, because *though your love is all you can give, it is very little*. Suppose you loved Christ more than any saint that ever lived, more than any apostle or martyr? Yet I put it to you, what is the highest supposable love compared with the love of *Christ* to *you*? If you regard the excellence of the character of God, does He not deserve a vastly more intense admiration and affection than we have as yet been capable of? Our whole heart is all too little, let it not be divided! Daily increasing in love, give Him all your affections. Consider that if you do not give Him all your love you have given Him nothing. If you give your body to be burned, and have not love to God, it profits you nothing. Though I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I should traverse the whole world to preach the gospel of Christ, though with dauntless courage I should brave the gates of hell, yet if I loved not God what would it all be but a dead sacrifice which could not be accepted upon His altar? Keep yourselves, then, dear friends, in the love of God, for it is the least you can do.

Remember, too, that *we must give the Lord our love, or else that love will go somewhere else*. We are so created that we must love something or other. If the Ever-Blessed One does not win our love, the world, the flesh, or the devil will gain it. The worst witch in the entire world is the world herself, and she soon casts her spell over the man who grows chill in his love to Jesus. You are hankering after some idol or other, my brethren, if God is not all in all to you! If His love is not very sweet within you, and if it does not cause you to love Him intensely, you will fall under the dominion either of some lust or passion or corruption, or else your heart will be cankered and consumed with the rust of care and covetousness and worldliness. Your heart cannot be kept from loving; its only safety lies in keeping it in the love of God.

As a motive for loving God, I should remind you *that here lies happiness*. Without an exception, this is the rule, that he who loves God most is happiest. "But there must be exceptions," says one. "If a man is in prison, if he is on the eve of a cruel death, will love to God fill him with delight?" It has done so many times! "But if a man rolls in riches, if he is blessed with good health and every comfort of life, surely *he* can be happy without the love of God in his soul." There is abundant evidence to show that it is *not* so, for the most favored children of this world become before long heart-sick of its joys, and the more honest among them have declared that they could find no satisfaction in all their possessions. It scarcely needs a Solomon to tell us that the entire world apart from the love of God is "vanity of vanities." A Christian at his worst is really more to be envied than a worldling at his best! I would sooner

have an ounce of the love of God than be loaded down with the wealth of nations. When the soul is filled with the love of Christ, it seems lifted beyond ordinary manhood. It burns with holy fire, and as it glows, it mounts on wings of flames, and soars towards heaven! Love's feet are like hinds' feet, so that they tread upon the high places of the earth, and leave care and doubt below it, even as the hinds of the mountains leave the marshes of the plains for those who cannot climb. The love of God breeds an enthusiasm and a sacred fervor within the soul which lifts men out of themselves, and bestows on them a sort of celestial other-life, a divine favor, by which the soul is borne up as on eagle's wings, and triumphs in unspeakable joy! This makes them 10 times stronger, braver, grander, and happier than they were before. I suppose to make us equal to the angels, we have but to love God more, and to make us *superior* to the angels, as we shall be in heaven, there will be nothing more needed than to fill us with a superior love to that which angels feel!

Brothers and sisters, this shall be my last argument. Get love to God and keep it, because *it will make you like Jesus*. Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master, dwelt in the love of God and was full of love to God, and consequently of love to men. This made it His meat and His drink to do His Father's will. The secret of the life of Christ lies in the supremacy of love within Him. He was indeed embodied love—into His heart no selfishness, ambition, anger, wrath, or any gross or sinister motive had ever entered. The prince of this world found nothing in Him, because God had everything in Him. Love shone in His eyes and spoke from His mouth; the Father's love upheld Him, and His own love to the Father covered Him with zeal as with a cloak. Get love, much love, healthy love, sacrificing love, and you will be like Jesus—and so you will be fit to dwell with Him in heaven! Love is the very atmosphere of Paradise; it is the odor of the flowers of the new Eden. Put on your beautiful garments, O bride of Jesus, and the garments of glory and beauty which become your rank, the garments which the Bridegroom's love has worked out for you! Gird on the sandals of love which are fairer than the lily, and more precious than the gold of Ophir; robed in the love of Jesus, you shall shine as if you were clothed with the sun, while your love to Him shall make you fair as the moon in His sight! Wear love to Jesus as your jewels and your adornments, and when you put them on, take care you never lay them aside, but wear them evermore, for so shall the King greatly desire your beauty.

These are some of the motives out of very many, but having no time to mention them all, we must leave to your own instructed minds the easy task of arguing for His love.

II. Secondly, THE MEANS for calming out the exhortation of the text shall now be considered. "Keep yourselves in the love of God." I am not going to dwell upon prayer because that is in the sentence before my text. Nor will I at this moment insist upon the necessity for the Holy Spirit's aid in this work, for that truth you all know and believe, and we have frequently dwelt upon it of late. The text does not make that doctrine prominent, and therefore, I will not enlarge upon it; not because I undervalue it, but because just now it is not our theme.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God"—how are you to do that? Well, first I should say, brethren, *endeavor to be full of that love at this present moment*. If I were told that a city was about to be besieged, and if I were commanded to keep the people supplied with provisions during the siege, I would lay in a plentiful store at once to provide for the famine. So, if you desire to continue in the love of God, have much of the love of God *now*, and pray for more of it. Oh, to know the love of God as much as ever it can be known! Be greedy, be hungry, be covetous after it! Store it up, fill your soul full of it as a man would fill his storehouses and granary if he knew that a dearth would be in the land. Notice that just before my text these words occur—"You, beloved, building," which means increasing, and growing up. The way to keep yourselves in the love of God is to obtain more and more of it. Love is like a fire, which, if it does not consume more fuel, burns low. You cannot stop where you are; to retain you must annex. Napoleon used to say, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." O Christians, remember that you must advance or backslide; you must build higher and higher! Love must become more and more supreme in your souls, or you will decline; if you would remain warm, be warm now! Alas, what a little stock of love some Christians have! You may look into their hearts long before you can spy it out. They are true believers, and therefore there must be *some* love in their bosoms, but their cruse of oil is almost run out, there is just a little at the bottom, hardly enough to cover the wood of the barrel. We ought not to be in so evil a case, for if we have so little grace in prosperous seasons, what

shall we do in times of temptation and trial? If the heart is full to overflowing, there is a likelihood that its stores will hold out, but scant affection makes us fear that it is a transient emotion, and not the love which is born from above.

If you desire to keep yourself in the love of God, *avoid everything that would dampen your love*. Avoid sin, especially, for sin is the poison of the love of God. Love of sin is the death of love of God! I mean by *sin*, not merely the grosser forms of vice, but everything which has a tendency to tarnish the virgin purity of your soul. I know some Christians who complain a good deal about their need of love to Jesus, and the smallness of their faith, and so on. When I track them to their haunts, I find that they keep ill company, and frequent amusements and assemblies where love to Christ is sorely wounded and almost slain! I put it to their own consciences whether they are ever likely to increase their love to Christ by going where His name is not adored and His cause is not befriended. I heard of one who professed to be a Christian, that he claimed to be able to attend the theater and yet to live very near to God. And I remembered the remark of a minister who said, “When I see great grace in those who frequent the theater, I shall at once grow prize roses in my coal cellar.” Just so; I shall cultivate not only roses, but palms and oranges in the vault under my house when that is the case! He who says that gay amusements help him to grow in the love of God utters a lie! Conscience condemns the worldly professor; he cannot come home from a place of amusement where the ungodly congregate, without feeling, “I have been where I had no right to be.” I am not now judging the outside world, but I am dealing with the members of our churches who profess to be separated from the world. If a worldling loves worldly amusement, I do not wonder at it, nor wish to deny him his enjoyments. Just as one feels about the swine, that they ought to have their pig wash, for it suits them, but none of us want to share it, so say we of the unconverted and their frivolities! But the case is otherwise with the children of God! O man of God, run not with the multitude! Wantonness, chambering, lewdness, and unclean mirth are not for you. No, “let them not be mentioned among you as becomes saints.”

I would also have you *avoid as much as possible the company of those who deaden your spirituality*. I like to drop into the house of the poorest Christian whose conversation will edify me, but though a man may be richer than I am, and his company may be desirable to me in many ways, if I find on coming out of his house that he has insinuated doubts into my mind, or that his language has tainted the purity of my conscience, I am bound to avoid him. If business calls me into connection with him I must go, or else I must go out of the world, but I will not seek as my companion any man who in any measure takes me off from keeping myself in the love of God. Neither should we read books which have an injurious effect upon the mind. I wish some of our younger friends would take good heed to this remark; you have little enough of the love of God in your souls—you do not need to pour cold water on it by emptying trashy novels upon it. Go not into the chill, cold air of irreligion and vanity! Brothers and Sisters, put everything aside that would hinder your loving God and knowing that He loves you; and if you have erred, and you find out this morning that you have done so, do not be angry at my rebuke, nor yet be led to despair of yourself, for the times of your ignorance God winks at and forgives! Go to your heavenly Father and say, “O Lord, help me to make this the rule of my conduct—that whatever prevents my feeling that You love me, and prevents my loving You, I may withdraw from at once, and have nothing more to do with it, for You have bid me keep myself in Your love.”

If you would love the Lord, *meditate much upon what He is, and what He has done for you*. Your debts to Him are overwhelming—try to feel them, and you will love Him because He first loved you. See your daily dependence, your hourly indebtedness, and the patience, constancy, faithfulness, and tenderness with which He cares for you! Here I need not enlarge, for you will not fail to do this if you are indeed the subjects of divine grace.

Next, dear friends, if you want to be kept in the love of God, follow earnestly the means of grace. Do not neglect the hearing of the word, nor the reading of it in private, nor secret prayer, nor the assembling of yourselves together. Come often to the Lord’s table—you will find it a very blessed means of quickening the pulse of your soul. There are God’s appointed ordinances for stirring up your love; do not be so proud as to think you can do without them. I fear there are some Christians who are so busy in *doing* good, that they do not allow themselves opportunities of *getting* good. Incessantly do I urge Christian people here to be engaged in some work for Christ; and I would urge it again and again, but some of you

young people ought not to absent yourselves from public worship in order to go and teach in ragged schools or elsewhere, for you have not yet enough knowledge, nor enough strength to be able to bear the frequent loss of the instructive ordinances. And even those of you who can bear to go upon half rations will be wise not to do so, for a man who works so long every day that he does not sleep enough, or eat enough, will in the long run be less capable of labor than if he had attempted less, and had taken more time for the feeding and resting of his body. Do remember that Martha, though she was very busy, was not so much commended as Mary who sat at Jesus' feet. Be busy as Martha, but be devout as Mary, and so will you keep your heart in the love of God!

You will do this very much, too, by *communing with the Lord*. Never spend a day without hearing your Master's voice! Do not come down from your chamber to see the face of man till you have seen the face of God! Do not let week after week roll by without communion with heaven. There is no trading like it; send the ships of prayer to the gold coast of communion with the Lord, and they will come back to you with priceless treasures! Hold high communion with the supreme Invisible, and your soul will be sure to love Him, for never man drew near to God without the love of God flowing into his soul.

Then I would say next, if you would love God, *be sure to work for Him*. If I wanted a man to love me, and I had my choice of two things, either to do something for the man or to let that man do something for me, if my sole object were to secure his love, I know which I would do; I would let him serve *me*. If you do a kindness for a man, he may be ungrateful and forget you, but if you let him do something for you, the more he does for you the more he will stick to you through life. For this reason, therefore, you will not only love God because of what He has done for you, but you will love Him because you have been allowed to do something for Him. Read the song of Deborah when she and Barak had chased away the adversaries. You do not read much in Judges about love to God, but at the end of her song you find it appearing—"So let all Your enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love You be as the sun when he goes forth in his might." She felt that she loved God because she had bravely led with Barak the host of God, and love to God had been kindled while she was battling for Him. Go and teach the ignorant, visit the sick, help the poor, and guide those that are out of the way, and though you thought you did not love Christ, you will soon discover that you do! Laziness is a bolster with which to suffocate love, but honest service of Jesus Christ is a platform upon which love shows herself in all her beauty, and there also she gathers her strength.

O love the Lord, all you His saints, and if you need yet another means of keeping in His love, then *live in expectation of seeing Him*. Nothing inflames a Christian's love more than feeling how much he owes in the past, and how much he expects in the future. Jesus is coming! You are soon to be with Him! Perhaps before another week is over you will behold His face! Surely you feel even now the kindling of warm desire—a passion for Him springs up within your spirit, and you long for the lagging days to fly, that you may be in His arms! Keep yourselves thus in His love. May God help you to do so, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 15.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—766, 804, 811.

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